

The AFP will target Italian organised crime and money-laundering syndicates washing billions of dollars a year through the Australian economy after invaluable intelligence was obtained on the ANOM platform.

Tomorrow, (8 June, 2022) marks the first anniversary of the overt action taken under [Operation Ironside](#), the biggest and most significant organised crime operation in the AFP's history.

In Australia, 383 alleged offenders have been charged with 2340 offences. More than 6.3 tonnes of illicit drugs, 147 weapons/firearms and \$55 million has been seized. Forty-two offenders charged under Operation Ironside have already pleaded guilty or have been sentenced.

Globally, excluding Australian statistics, more than 700 alleged offenders have been charged and 65 tonnes of illicit drugs seized.

AFP Assistant Commissioner Crime Command Nigel Ryan said the intelligence obtained through ANOM provided an invaluable insight into the scale of illicit drug imports facilitated by the 'Ndrangheta, the profits they were making and how often they worked with outlaw motorcycle groups.

"In collaboration with Italian authorities, the AFP has been mapping and assessing the familial relationships, through blood or marriage of the 'Ndrangheta in Australia," Assistant Commissioner Ryan said.

"Our intelligence, new powers under the Surveillance Legislation Amendment (Identify and Disrupt) Act 2021, our world-leading capabilities and our international networks are beginning to remove the cloak of secrecy that has allowed members of the 'Ndrangheta to operate in Australia with impunity for too many years.

"We have about 51 Italian organised crime clans in Australia.

"We have identified 14 confirmed 'Ndrangheta clans across Australia, involving thousands of members.

"Our picture of the clans is continuing to grow, but intelligence suggests their overall membership could potentially be similar to that of patched

members in Australian outlaw motorcycle gangs. That shows how subterranean and significant the 'Ndrangheta are in Australia."

"The 'Ndrangheta are not just an Australian problem – they are a global problem and they are responsible for trafficking 70 per cent of the world's cocaine. In Australia, they are also responsible for cannabis and methamphetamine trafficking.

"During Operation Ironside, law enforcement charged a number of 'Ndrangheta members, some who were taking their orders from bosses in Calabria.

"The 'Ndrangheta are flooding Australia with illicit drugs and are pulling the strings of Australian outlaw motorcycle gangs, who are behind some of the most significant violence in our communities.

"They have become so powerful in Australia that they almost own some OMCG's, who will move drugs around for their 'Ndrangheta financiers, or carry out acts of violence on behalf of the 'Ndrangheta."

Assistant Commissioner Ryan said dismantling the 'Ndrangheta in Australia would be long and challenging.

"They have been able to stay under the radar by living modest lives, in modest homes. They mix their illegitimate money with money from their legitimate construction, agricultural or catering businesses and all of this makes it more difficult to not only identify criminality but to prove it," he said.

Last month, the AFP hosted several overseas law enforcement groups, including from Italy, Colombia and the United States, in a bid to work together to not only reveal members of the 'Ndrangheta but to take action against them.

Assistant Commissioner Ryan said the action was targeted at criminals, not countries nor ethnic groups.

"If you are a member of a cartel operating out of Mexico, a member of a triad operating out of Asia or a member of an outlaw motorcycle gang in

Australia, and you are impacting on Australians because of your illegal activity, then you will be targeted by the AFP.”

He said money launderers who existed only to enable global drug trafficking syndicates would also be targeted.

“Multi-millions of dollars a day are being laundered in Australia on behalf of illicit drug syndicates. Money laundering poses a significant threat to Australia’s national security as it subverts, exploits, and distorts legitimate markets and economic activity.

“The AFP’s strategy is to target transnational serious organised crime by attacking their finances, communications and operations.

“One of the keys to disrupting the trafficking of illicit drugs involves dismantling the money laundering organisations that move and legitimise drug profits. And as we did in Operation Ironside, we continue to target the communications platforms being used to plan their criminality.”

The University of New South Wales’s National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre last month released a report revealing there were more than 1800 drug-induced deaths in Australia in 2020 – equivalent to about five drug-induced deaths a day in Australia.

The report said that following a period of relative stability, the rate of drug overdose deaths involving amphetamines had increased substantially from 2011 to 2020. Plus, the rate recorded in 2020 was the highest across the period of monitoring from 1997.

Assistant Commissioner Ryan said the production and trafficking of illicit drugs had the potential to impact on everyone in Australia.

“On a macro level the trafficking of illicit drugs impacts on our national security, social security and our economy. On a micro level, it makes our roads less safe, law-abiding citizens are at risk of becoming collateral damage in the wars of organised criminals who shoot at each other in public.

“The AFP knows too well about the harms illicit drugs does to our communities and that’s why we target transnational serious organised crime.”

BACKGROUND

The ‘Ndrangheta, also known as the Calabrian mafia, adopt a set of recognised shared behaviours that can be taught within ‘Ndrangheta families.

These behaviours include maintaining a low-profile, attempts to demonstrate a legitimate purpose, intimidation due to reputation, threat or use of violence, obtaining financial benefits via corruption and not displaying overt wealth.

‘Ndrangheta clans are headed by senior figures that have authority over the other ‘Ndrangheta members of the clan.

Australian-based ‘Ndrangheta are believed to be engaging in current criminal activity assisted, directed and or facilitated by members of the ‘Ndrangheta based in Italy.

‘Ndrangheta members regularly collaborate with other organised crime groups, such as outlaw motorcycle gangs, Asian organised crime groups and Middle Eastern organised crime groups to assist with the facilitation of criminal activity, including drug importations, money laundering, tobacco distribution and acts of violence. In recent years members of the ‘Ndrangheta have also been involved in the distribution of encrypted telecommunication devices and are known to use these devices to facilitate and hide their illegal activity.

Australian ‘Ndrangheta use legitimate businesses, such as agricultural, restaurants and construction companies to hide and launder proceeds of crime.

The Australian ‘Ndrangheta are believed to have been involved in money laundering since the 1970s through legitimate business, making it difficult for law enforcement agencies to track the original source of money. ‘Ndrangheta continue to launder proceeds of crime and facilitate

illegal drug activity through the use of bitcoin dealers, corrupt lawyers and accountants.

With strong familial relations and loyalty, international reach, exploitation of other criminal groups ability to infiltrate people in positions of power, 'Ndrangheta members pose a significant risk to Australian authorities.

Australian 'Ndrangheta members are difficult to combat, infiltrate and disrupt due to the code of silence.